



Monday 9th October 2023

Monthly Parish Update

Vale of White Horse District

Councillors

Cllr Hayleigh Gascoigne and

Cllr Debra Dewhurst

Hello from Hayleigh and Debra

This month we have been preparing for our full council meeting on 11th October ([agenda](#) published on the VoWH website) as well as attending parish council meetings and briefings hosted by Oxfordshire County Council. We are, as a council, working on our Joint Local Plan with South Oxfordshire District Council, which will guide what kinds of new housing and infrastructure such as leisure facilities, green spaces and transport, are needed and where they should go. It will also outline the ways we can meet our targets to make our part of the county carbon neutral by setting environmental standards for development.

You may have noticed that work has started to prepare the new junction with the A4130 for Valley Park. We understand that Valley Park and its impacts continue to be a concern for residents. As a result, when the planning application for the first parcel of 172 homes for Valley Park was ready for a decision this month, we decided to bring this to planning committee. This means that rather than a planning officer making the decision, a committee of councillors considers the application during a meeting where members of the public and parish councils are able to speak and then hear the debate afterwards.

Debra spoke at the meeting on behalf of residents. This is what she said:

I'm one of the district councillors for Blewbury and Harwell ward which includes the Parish of Western Valley, where Valley Park will be built. Valley Park will be the biggest development we've had in this ward. It's not in the scope of this application but residents and councillors are still deeply concerned that these homes are being built before the infrastructure needed to support them when healthcare, childcare and education in the area are massively overstretched. Families moving into this first parcel of homes are unlikely to be able to register with a local GP, and will struggle to secure a nursery or school place for their children. That being said we're here tonight to consider the first parcel of homes.

As district councillor for this ward I would like to raise a couple of concerns residents still have. One being the noise from the A4130. There is concern that the passive ventilation and double glazing condition in this report won't be enough and doesn't address noise levels in gardens. Whilst it's not the scope of this application to mitigate for future applications, the potential dualling of the A4130 as part of the HIF1 application is a further concern to noise levels with the widening bringing the road closer to homes and increasing traffic flow.

Another concern is the remote position. Residents would like reassurance that a good surface, well lit pedestrian and cycle path is provided ready for the first occupation, to connect the site to Great Western Park shops and school without the need for car use. It seems a shame to make the commitment to having cycle parking for each home if a car is still needed to reach shops and schools until further homes and infrastructure are built.

I note that there is a commitment to 110 bird boxes, 22 of these for swifts. This falls below the 80% ratio of swift nests per building provided by Taylor Wimpey in their first application for Valley Park. Since swifts are endangered in the area, I urge Persimmon to increase their offering to match this, by installing swift bricks in their buildings.

Aside from these concerns, I'd like to commend Persimmon on their commitment to installing solar panels, heat pumps and EV chargers for every home and look forward to seeing these come to fruition. I hope that some thought has been given to the orientation of houses and placement of the solar panels with respect to getting the best solar output. I would hate to think that some homes would be disadvantaged because the panels were not optimally orientated.

I hope that other developers will follow Persimmon's lead with these important measures for tackling the climate crisis.

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Although planning permission was granted for this parcel of homes, the planning committee did comment that it is such a shame that this parcel of homes will come before the infrastructure the residents will need. Unfortunately, because outline planning permission has been given for Valley Park, infrastructure was not something that could be considered against this particular application.

If you have any concerns, questions or suggestions for us as councillors, please do email us. As a reminder, council meetings are held in public and if you wish to address council or committee, you can contact Democratic Services ahead of time. If you need more guidance on this, please let us know!

We use these monthly updates to keep you updated on our activities and general council news. We also post on our councillor Facebook Pages:

www.facebook.com/CllrHayleigh & www.facebook.com/Debra4BlewburyAndHarwell

Please get in touch with any issues or concerns via email

hayleigh.gascoigne@whitehorsedc.gov.uk and debra.dewhurst@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

Community Support

Support for Ukraine

The council's [support for Ukraine](#) webpage continues to provide information and guidance for Ukrainian nationals and their hosts. South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils, as part of the Oxfordshire system which includes local authority, health and voluntary sector partners working closely together, are supporting people seeking refuge across several schemes. These are Homes for Ukraine, Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme, Afghan Citizens Resettlement scheme, UK Resettlement Schemes, the Hong Kong British National (Overseas) visa scheme and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

Community Hub

The Hub can offer support and direct people to help on a range of things including Cost of Living, food support, etc. If you are struggling financially or just finding life difficult, the community hub can help. Whether it's practical support or just advice, please get in touch:

- Call: 01235 422600
- Email: communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk

The office hours are 8.30am - 5pm Mon to Thurs, 8.30am-4.30pm on Fri (and closed on bank holidays).

Local News

Valley Park Update

This section of our report provides an overview of the current live planning applications for Valley Park. There are often several live applications relating to the development, however those labelled 'RM' i.e. 'Reserved Matters' are typically the most noteworthy as they request planning permission for specific parcels of housing on the development. Residents can provide comments on these applications during the consultation period. Applications labelled as 'DIS' i.e. 'Discharge' relate to specific conditions from the outline planning permission and are not usually open for public consultation. The current live planning applications for Valley Park are listed below along with an update on the status of each provided by the Vale planning officers. Perhaps the most noteworthy is application for the first parcel of homes, which has now been approved. It was called into planning committee by us, the district councillors, and decided on by the members of the committee on 27th September.

Application Approved

P23/V0667/RM - Persimmon's first housing parcel (172 dwellings) was considered by planning committee on 27 September and approved. The decision notice has been issued.

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Application Withdrawn

P23/V0432/FUL – temporary construction access from the A4130

Persimmon and Taylor Wimpey withdrew this application and therefore, it will not be determined.

Applications Under Consideration

P22/V2744/RM – 246 dwellings

Amended plans were received on 26 September and consultation on the amended plans arranged (including Western Valley and Harwell Parish Councils), with comments due by 18 October 2023.

A key issue affecting this parcel of land is that parts of the site are in flood zones 2 and 3 and therefore, could be susceptible to fluvial flooding. Condition 36 of the outline planning permission excludes built development from flood zones 2 and 3 but the plans including the latest amendments, show housing in these areas. Taylor Wimpey claim this part of the site should not be in flood zones 2 and 3 and has produced flood modelling seeking to demonstrate that this part of the site should be categorised as flood zone 1 which is suitable for housing development. The flood modelling has been submitted by Taylor Wimpey to the Environment Agency and the Environment Agency's comments are awaited.

P22/V0604/RM – infrastructure for Persimmon and Taylor Wimpey first phases

Amended plans were received on 17 August 2023 and officers need to review the changes made.

P22/V2624/DIS – Surface and foul water drainage

No change - This application has not progressed since the last updates i.e. we have requested cross sections for the proposed swales and attenuation basins and asked the applicant to address the Vale drainage engineer comments together with demonstrating that the drainage scheme can be accommodated with other proposed infrastructure e.g. footways and cycle ways and meet the Strategic Design Code expectations. Responses are awaited.

P23/V0659/DIS – approval of details reserved by of condition 33 - Travel Plan

No change - OCC as highway authority responded to our consultation and are seeking amendments to the travel plan which were put to the applicants for consideration but no response has been forthcoming to date.

Climate & Environment News

[New Oxfordshire wide air quality website launched](#)

A new Oxfordshire air quality website has launched today – providing up to date air quality guidance and resources for across the county - www.oxonair.uk

Cllr Mark Coleman, Vale of White Horse District Council Cabinet member for environmental services and waste, said: “We know our residents, particularly those living close to busy roads, have concerns about air pollution and its impact on individuals’ health. This newly designed and easy to use website will provide residents with up-to-date information about their local air quality and alert them to air pollution issues.”

[Plans for reservoir continue despite local objections](#)

Plans for an expanded controversial reservoir near Abingdon have again been criticised by local communities, with Vale of White Horse District Council urging water providers to consider alternative solutions. The council has reaffirmed its objections to the reservoir in a formal letter to Thames Water following submission of their revised Draft Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) to government.

In the updated plans, the size of the proposed reservoir has *increased* by 50 per cent from 100Mm³ to 150Mm³ and would be completed by 2040. You can view the **[Thames Water Resources Management Plan and a customer summary](#)**, as well as the **[revised draft Regional Plan](#)** online. The revised draft

Water Resources Management Plan will now be reviewed by Government. If Government endorse the plan, it will be finalised and published in 2024.

[Residents urged to 'Check it before you chuck it'](#)

We are urging residents to 'Check it before you chuck it' as part of a drive to increase the amount and quality of recycling in the district. South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have launched a new campaign asking people to check before they chuck items in their recycling bins.

An estimated 3,340 tonnes* – the equivalent of just over 200 double decker buses – of items that residents put in their recycling bins during 2022/23 were not actually recyclable – that's 11 per cent of all the contents of our green bins for the whole year!

To find out which bin an item should go in, 'Check it before you chuck it' at southandvale.gov.uk/checkit

[Thermal Imaging Camera available to loan](#)

As the weather gets colder, the council will be lending out our thermal imaging camera again to community groups and parishes. You can use the camera to identify spots in buildings where heat is escaping and where energy-saving measures could help make a place more comfortable and reduce fuel bills at the same time.

The Climate and Biodiversity team is also hosting a training session on Thursday 2 November at Abbey House on how to use the camera and interpret images. For more information, you can email climateaction@southandvale.gov.uk

[Online forum on supporting home energy efficiency upgrades](#)

The Climate and Biodiversity team is hosting a **free online forum** to help town and parish councils and community groups (and council members) support residents to reduce their energy use and costs. This takes place on **Tuesday 14 November at 6-7.15pm**. The speakers will talk about the support that is available and some inspiring examples of local projects to help residents. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions.

To register for the event, you can email climateaction@southandvale.gov.uk

Council News

[New Cabinet Members confirmed at Vale of White Horse District Council](#)

Councillor Bethia Thomas, Leader of the Vale of White Horse District Council, has confirmed two new cabinet members: Councillor Diana Lugova – Cabinet Member for Planning and Development Management, and Councillor Lucy Edwards – Cabinet Member for Communications. Cllr Thomas said "I'd like to thank our existing cabinet members and welcome our new cabinet members. Our new cabinet is a true example of diversity and inclusion, retaining the experience of members with proven records of delivering over the years, with their wealth of experience and abilities, and brand-new members who will, I have no doubt, bring fresh ideas and perspective to their roles.

[Fun for all the family this October half-term](#)

A range of free and low-cost fun activities are available for children and their families during the October half-term across South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse. Provided by South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils, sessions include fun outdoor orienteering and events inside such as dance, sports, theatre and much more. Head to whitehorsedc.gov.uk/HolidayActivities to find out more.

[Supporting Safer Places](#)

It's important that we do what we can as a district to make sure our most vulnerable residents feel safe. Our Community Safety team works closely with the police and local businesses to identify organisations and locations that can become **Safe Places**.

Safe Places are for people in need of help or somewhere to go where they feel safe, whether they may be frightened, are in need of medical support or just having a bad day. They can be identified by a nationally recognisable logo, which we have shared in the link below and can be downloaded so that the public can see it clearly.

We're looking for more organisations and businesses in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse that would be happy to sign up to being a Safe Place for our residents. They can find out more at www.safeplaces.org.uk or by emailing our **Community Safety team**.