

REPORT FROM VALE OF WHITE HORSE DISTRICT COUNCILLORS (WATCHFIELD & SHRIVENHAM WARD) TO PARISH COUNCIL ASSEMBLIES 2018

Introduction

Another busy year to report on representing the 12 Parishes of the ward and covering a wide range of views of the Parishes that we serve.

Simon continued as Chair of Audit & Governance Committee and the Faringdon Area Grants Committee. Elaine continued as a Cabinet Member but with an expanded area of responsibility for Housing and Environment, including waste, licensing, community safety and technical services.

This report covers the main updates for the whole of the Watchfield & Shrivenham Ward that we represent.

Planning

Planning issues have again been top of the agenda and we continue to do our best in representing the views of residents across the 12 Parishes.

The Local Plan is now in place and has an 8.4-year land supply in this area.

Local Plan Part 2 was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination inspection on 23 February. David Reed has been nominated by the Planning Inspectorate to independently examine the Plan and we await confirmation of the dates and venue when this will take place. No strategic sites have been identified in the Western Vale.

NPPF – The revised National Planning Policy Framework has been published and is currently being consulted on. The consultation deadline is 10 May.

Appeals Five appeals in the Ward were registered to be considered by the Planning Inspectorate. Four of these have been dismissed, including the Gypsy and Traveller site on Compton Road, Shrivenham. The appeal for the Badbury Hill (Great Coxwell) site will be held in due course.

Legal & General – Shrivenham residents were invited to attend a public exhibition held on Tuesday 20 February from 1500hrs to 1900hrs. The exhibition gave residents the opportunity to discuss the type and design of dwellings with representatives from the company. Initially L & G propose to build 240 homes on the Phase 1 allocated site which is located directly behind the Blue Cedar development to the east of Highworth Road. This Phase also includes land for a new primary school. It is anticipated that a Reserved Matters application will be submitted within the next couple of weeks. The Phase 2 Reserved Matters application for 265 dwellings is expected to be submitted before the end of this year. Concerns were expressed regarding access to the Phase 1 site during construction and L & G indicated that they may build a temporary access road from the A420. This is to be confirmed with the County Council.

Bovis – Townsend Road – Bovis has submitted a revised Reserved Matters application which addresses many issues that have been raised by the Parish Council and local residents. The consultation for the revised plan ended on 12 April.

Gladman – Townsend Road – Phase 2 – We wrote to Gladman explaining that the Vale has more than a five year land supply and that the site is not included in either Local Plan Part 1 or in the draft Local Plan Part 2 which clearly states that there will be no additional allocated sites in the western vale. Needless to say there has been no acknowledgement of receipt of our letter which was sent by both Email and post.

Taylor Wimpey - Longcot Road – The Vale Enforcement Team and OCC Highways are dealing with numerous issues and breaches of planning conditions that have been raised by us, as well as the Parish Council and local residents.

The application for additional dwellings was considered by the Vale Planning Committee on Wednesday 7 March and permission granted. There will now be 63 dwellings rather than the 59 that were approved at appeal.

Land South of Steeds Farm Gt. Coxwell – An Outline application for a further 125 dwellings has been submitted to the Vale. This application is in addition to the 200 that are already being constructed on part of this strategic site. Concerns have been raised by both Gt. Coxwell Parish Council and Faringdon Town Council as well as local residents. The deadline for comments passed on 15 March and the decision target date is scheduled for 2 May 2018. This application will be considered by the full Planning Committee.

Growth Deal – The Chancellor announced funding of £215m over a five year period for the County in his November 2017 budget. All six Oxfordshire Councils have now approved the deal. The deal would also see the establishment of a Joint Statutory Spatial Plan (JSSP) for the County to improve a joined up approach to planning. The Vale has made it clear that the plan must not allocate housing sites and will put no pressure on the Vale before 2031. The Government formally signed off the Growth Deal early April. The next stage will be to create the Statutory Spatial Plan (JSSP) by 31 July 2018 for the County to improve a joined up approach to planning. Further consultation on this plan will follow in due course.

Swindon Eastern Villages - The impact of the start of the new “Eastern Villages” in Swindon are starting to take shape and will have a significant impact on our villages. A total of 8000 dwellings will be built in 8 villages and South Marston will expand. Currently 2 main developments are in the pipeline – Rowborough (2380) and Great Stall (1800). A new application is to be considered by SBC for 370 homes on the Redland Airfield Site.

Unitary Authority

A year ago, a proposal for a new Unitary Authority was submitted to Central Government. This was a combined three authority (Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxfordshire District Council and the Vale of White Horse District Council) proposal entitled "A new council for a Better Oxfordshire". The Vale has written to Sajid Javid renewing the call for a Unitary Council. Unitary Councils have been in the news recently with both Dorset and Buckinghamshire receiving approval for reorganisation and Northamptonshire is expected to follow. We are awaiting further information

Recycling

The Vale has slipped from No.2 to No.4 in the whole of the country for the % of recycling material. It is unfortunate that the Vale has been unable to maintain its level of performance. This has been primarily due to contamination of recycling material.

There has been an improvement since the introduction of NO Black Sacks. Recent efforts have included a campaign to reduce the disposal of food in grey bins and to correctly use the food waste buckets.

Fly Tipping

The Vale has successfully prosecuted a number of individuals for fly-tipping. The latest was for dumping of waste in the same place on three different occasions and caught on camera. The offender was fined and made to pay costs and compensation which amounted to over £1500.

Public Realm Team

Included in the Vale's budget is an allocation of £250,000 per annum over the next three years for delivering improvements throughout the district. The project is in its initial stages and more details will be published shortly.

Grants

The following dates have been confirmed for grant applications:

Capital and New Homes Bonus – Round one – 25 April-6 June Round two (budget permitting) 11 September-22 October

Festival Grants – 1 April-28 February 2019

The Grants Team are always pleased to offer advice and contact details are on the Vale website. In addition the team are holding advice sessions on 18 April in Uffington and 24 April in Letcombe Regis. For more information call 01235 422103. Booking is essential.

Appointment of New Chief Executive

Mark Stone was recently appointed as new Chief Executive after a period in the role as an interim measure.

Conclusion

Along with your local Parish Councillors we work tirelessly for our communities and deal with numerous issues that affect the area.

We attend a variety of meetings and make representation to various Vale Committees, Swindon Borough Council, the County Council and other organisations. We work hard to get our voice heard and our views listened to.

We continue to provide assistance and advice to residents when they have any problems or concerns. We may not advertise what we do on a daily basis but as locals we have our local community at heart and will serve you all as best we can.

Cllrs. Simon Howell and Elaine Ware
April/May 2018