

Comments on Gladman proposal for land off Didcot Road, Harwell

Keep Harwell Rural vigorously opposes this proposal. Firstly because it aims to remove the last open gap between Harwell village and the urban conurbation of Greater Didcot, resulting in the coalescence of the two, and secondly because it would result in the over development of Harwell.

Coalescence

This development is contrary to Policy NE10 of the VWH Local Plan, which aims to protect important gaps between settlements. Once the expansion of Didcot is complete there will be housing on the eastern side of the A34 on both sides of the B4493, namely the Great Western Park and Valley Park developments. The development proposed would result in housing being built up to the western side of the A34 as well, resulting in coalescence between the rural village of Harwell and the urban development of Didcot.

The proposed development is also contrary to Policy CP44 in the VWH Local Plan, which aims to maintain cherished landscape features, because it would remove the vista to and from Bishop's Manor Farm and the old cherry orchards of Harwell; both important elements in Harwell's history.

Over development

Of all the villages in VWH, Harwell is already absorbing proportionately more housing than any other and requires no more. There are already plans for approximately 65 houses at Greenwood Meadows, 85 at Blenheim Hill, 214 on Grove Road as well as 1000s of houses within the Parish of Harwell as part of the Great Western Park and Valley Park developments, and 100s more planned for the Harwell Campus.

The development Gladman is suggesting is not proposed in the VWH Local Plan to 2031.

The aim of the proposal is also unclear. The proposal described in the leaflet is for 60 houses on a 4 hectare site, but Gladman has also submitted a statement to the Examination in Public into the VWH Local Plan for 60 houses on an expanded site of 9 hectares extending up to the boundary of the traditional orchard on Cow Lane. Which, if either, should we believe?

The suggestion that Harwell requires this development to make it a viable village is laughable, as is the idea that another 60 houses on top of the new extra 364 just built or in progress mentioned above would produce 'a more balanced age profile'. Harwell is a vibrant community and would like to remain one. The extra housing proposed in this development would push the school and GP provision beyond its limits, cause the coalescence of Harwell and Didcot, and spoil the rural nature of Harwell village.

Keep Harwell Rural (KHR) is a residents' group independent of any statutory body. It was formed in 1998 to enable residents to express their views about changes that may affect Harwell, in ways that could augment and complement the views expressed by the Harwell Parish Council. KHR has inputs from a cross-section of villagers concerned about education, traffic and road safety, sustainability, the amenities provided by our nearest town, Didcot, and the preservation of the character of a village with a thousand year history. KHR has responded to planning documents since 1998 and has taken part in Structure Plan and Local Plan Public Enquiries.