

South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031: Refined Options February 2015

Comments from the Keep Harwell Rural Campaign March 2015

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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.

The *Keep Harwell Rural Campaign* only wishes to address the following Questions from the LP2031 Refined Options Document.

Q4: *What do you think is the most appropriate way of dividing the 3,600 homes between a) Science Vale within South Oxfordshire, b) the market towns and larger villages, and c) the smaller villages?*

In our comments on *Issues and Scope, June 2014*, we opposed any further development at Didcot or within Science Vale, where existing and proposed developments by VWH and SODC will already strain local resources and infrastructure, would create housing market saturation and would drastically affect our local environment. We have no reason to change that view, but since SODC has decided anyway to include Science Vale, our answer to Q4 is 'as few as possible in (a) and at most 1,000 homes'.

Q5: *Which locations in Science Vale do you think could be suitable for additional new housing and what positives would you like to see the development bring?*

SODC itself recognises the limitations around Didcot where VWH and SODC together are already planning massive developments. Didcot is therefore totally unsuitable for additional

new housing. The other sites suggested – Culham and Berinsfield – do merit consideration for any housing within the Science Vale area.

Q14: *Where do you think is the most appropriate place to plan for Oxford's unmet need and why?*

Given that Oxford City Council is estimating a need for between 5,000 and 15,000 new homes from SODC, the figure required of 3,000 is presumably subject to much further negotiation. We also have to bear in mind that some figure will also emerge as a requirement from VWH, which is likely to impact Harwell. We still believe that an extension to Oxford City east of Grenoble Road is the least damaging option. This location has the enormous advantage of placing development where it is most needed adjacent to the City of Oxford and where there is already good public transport and other infrastructure. It has the disadvantage of being within the Green Belt, but the area is no more attractive in terms of the natural environment than other areas in VWH and SODC threatened by increased development, especially those around Didcot and its neighbouring villages.

Keep Harwell Rural Campaign

24 March 2015