

KEEP HARWELL RURAL CAMPAIGN

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25 January 2016

Councillor Janet Shelley,
1 Hillside,
Newbury Road,
East Hendred, OX12 8LE

cc Members of VWH Planning Committee

Dear Councillor Shelley

Planning Application P14/V2873/O – HAW – Valley Park

You will know from your visit to Harwell last November that there is one aspect of the plans for Valley Park that is extremely important to the future of Harwell village. We are writing to ask you to press the planning officers and developers to incorporate what we are seeking into the revised plans for Valley Park before they come to the Planning Committee stage.

We are proposing a small change that would make an enormous difference to the future of Harwell as a distinct settlement. The village has been here for over a thousand years, has retained its semi-rural setting despite enormous local changes since the mid 20th century, and remains one of the Vale's Conservation Areas and hosts many listed buildings. You can help to protect it from the threat of coalescence with the growth of Didcot.

The plans for Valley Park extend up to the A34 from the east. Harwell village houses extend almost up the A34 from the west. It seems to be assumed that the A34 protects Harwell village from coalescence, but as proposals stand anyone leaving Harwell and crossing over the A34 bridge would first meet the junction of the Harwell by-pass and then immediately a mostly built up section of Valley Park.

What we want is that between the by-pass junction and the edge of Great Western Park there should be a preserved area of natural vegetation. This currently comprises rows of trees along both sides of the B4493 with fields beyond. It would give the traveller a short distance of genuinely rural gap landscape before meeting built-up Didcot. There is a bend south in the B4493 just before the edge of Great Western Park so the view from the by-pass junction would be essentially natural. The attached plan of this green corridor is taken from our representations on the Local Plan and has been mapped onto the proposed Masterplan for Valley Park.

If it were imposed on the plans for Valley Park it would result in the loss of at most 5.5 hectares of land proposed for housing. This is surely a very small price to pay for retaining a permanent feature of the natural landscape between Harwell and Didcot.

This green corridor has been proposed by Harwell Parish Council and Keep Harwell Rural in representations on the Local Plan that have yet to be heard by the Planning Inspector. It has also been included in the responses that the Parish Council and KHR have made to the Planning Application for Valley Park. These have not had any indication of any positive response from the planning officers or the developers. In the meantime Didcot has been awarded 'Garden Town' status and green connections are cited as one of its features. So including our green corridor along the B4493 in the plans for Valley Park, maintaining some rural gap for Harwell, would seem entirely appropriate.

Please, will you take up this case on behalf of your constituents?

Yours sincerely





The 'green corridor' mapped onto the developer's masterplan for Valley Park Harwell village is on the left.



The green corridor from the west (Harwell)



The green corridor from the east (Didcot)



Please help us to preserve this remaining rural gap!