

BLEWBURY PARISH COUNCIL

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Blewbury

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December 18th, 2014

Dear Sirs

Blewbury Parish Council's response to the Vale's Local Plan 2031 Part 1 consultation

Strategic sites and policies

Core policy 4: Housing needs: This Council repeats its objection made in earlier consultations that the housing requirement is based on economic forecasts for 16 years in the future. Economists struggle to produce meaningful forecasts for just two or three years ahead.

Core policy 17: Highway improvements: Blewbury Parish Council welcomes the proposed improvements to the highway infrastructure and particularly to the strategic cycle network. The Council asks that plans are brought forward for a cycleway between Upton and Blewbury so that Blewbury residents can gain direct cycle access to cycleways to employment sites at Harwell and Didcot

Design guide

In reading your Design Document we can find no reference to space standards. We see this as a serious omission as good internal design is essential to the quality of life, not just for today's residents but to future generations.

Although there are no national standards for the amount of household space considered to be essential for comfortable living, there is much evidence on which such standards could easily be built. In September 2011 RIBA published its paper "The case for space: the size of England's new homes" which provides a blueprint for the space required for comfortable living. Also, in some areas minimum space standards are required for social housing. If the amount of space is seen as important for social housing, why not for all developments? Both the Greater London Authority and Bristol City Council have worked on creating space standards and their reports are available on the web. If other forward thinking local government authorities can promote such policies, why can't the Vale?

In recent years, planning policies requiring a high minimum density and developers anxious to squeeze ever more units out of expensive sites have combined to create housing that is meanly provided with living space by comparison with previous decades. Unless this trend is reversed, present day housing developments risk becoming notorious for the low quality of amenity that they provide within the home and could go the same way as 1960's tower blocks in terms of unpopularity.

We believe that internal space is a topic central to civilised living. Apart from the obvious need for space for cooking, eating, living and storage, adequate space is essential to maintain essential privacy, to allow children quiet conditions for homework, to ease pressure on the bathroom facilities, and many more. Academic research provides evidence of the damage that overcrowding can do to residents.

We appreciate that the Vale is under great pressure to finalise its Local Plan as quickly as possible but ask that important issues such as this are not overlooked.

Parking: We have no real issue with much in Parking Principles DG31 to DG50 but believe that the County Council's parking standards are in urgent need of revision and that continued use without amendment is sowing problems for the future. The trend in recent years towards developments of greater density combined with increasing ownership of ever larger cars is causing parking strain in new developments. These social changes need to be reflected in revised parking standards.

Yours faithfully

Elaine de Ridder
Clerk, on behalf of Blewbury PC